



LEARNING NEEDS AMONGST WOMEN: CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

Lifelong learning offers a holistic perspective on the role of education in a person's life cycle. It affirms that learning, as a continuous process in life, plays an essential role in enabling individuals to adapt to, and deal with, new challenges and changes in their life's and surrounding environment. This paper presents results from a cross-disciplinary content analysis of 90 women living in Vadodara city. This research study examined need of women for lifelong learning, including the resources used for learning. It also examined the satisfaction gained through the learning sources and women preference for the courses they preferred to learn. It throws focus on the reasons why women want to learn and its importance in their life. The findings reveals that majority of the women were homemakers who want to learn something new and reason could be they were not getting enough opportunity to learning it at home. Majority of them shown willingness to learn new skill or knowledge and they suggested having centre for learning in the city. The study concludes that the lifelong learning is a need of women and they needs to learn for self development and their families' development. It keeps them active and updated with recent knowledge around. They want to change them as per the new environment and for that they want to learn and be part of life long learning process.

KEY WORDS: Women, Lifelong learning, Education, sources of learning.

INTRODUCTION

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young."

— Henry Ford

(<https://www.contributoria.com>)

LIFELONG LEARNING AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Lifelong learning may be broadly defined as learning that is pursued throughout life: learning that is flexible, diverse and available at different times and in different places. Lifelong learning crosses sectors, promoting learning beyond traditional schooling and throughout adult life (ie post-compulsory education). This definition is based on Delors' (1996) four 'pillars' of education for the future.

- **Learning to know** - mastering learning tools rather than acquisition of structured knowledge.
- **Learning to do** - equipping people for the types of work needed now and in the future including innovation and adaptation of learning to future work environments.
- **Learning to live together, and with others** - peacefully resolving conflict, discovering other people and their cultures, fostering community capability, individual competence and capacity, economic resilience, and social inclusion.
- **Learning to be** - education contributing to a person's complete development: mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic appreciation and spirituality.

Lifelong learning offers a holistic perspective on the role of education in a person's life cycle. It affirms that learning, as a continuous process in life, plays an essential role in enabling individuals to adapt to, and deal with, new challenges and changes in their life's and surrounding environment. Lifelong learning, embracing all forms of educational and learning experiences, helps individuals to engage in purposeful interactions with their environment through the development of their knowledge, skills and critical thinking abilities. Implicit to the idea of lifelong learning is the concept of 'life wide' learning. While the former emphasises the continuity of learning throughout the human life cycle, the latter recognises that people find it necessary to engage in multiple learning activities simultaneously, through different modalities and in varying settings.

Lifelong learners are confronted with a broad range of activities they have to manage every day. In most cases they have to combine learning, working, and everyday life throughout the day. For the support of lifelong learners, their daily practices and learning patterns are of importance.

Lifelong learning includes a variety of different educational scenarios and contexts in which learners operate. These contexts include traditional formal programs, non-formal education, on the job-training and informal, accidental learning.

Lifelong learning has been an integral part of Indian culture. The ancient Indian religious tradition and culture have accorded prime importance to the acquisition of knowledge and upheld the virtues of learning. Notwithstanding the gradual modernization of society and the emergence of multiple channels of learning, the first formal recognition of lifelong learning came in 1966 when the Indian Education Commission (1964-66) made the following observation:

Education does not end with schooling, but is a lifelong process. The adult needs an understanding of the rapidly changing world and the growing complexities of society. Even those who had the most sophisticated education must continue to learn; the alternative is obsolescence... Thus viewed the function of adult education in a democracy is to provide every adult citizen an opportunity for education of the type which he wishes and which he should have for his personal enrichment, professional advancement and effective participation in social and political life (Report of Indian Education Commission, 1966).

IMPORTANCE OF LIFELONG LEARNING FOR WOMEN

Elucidating, the importance and benefits of lifelong learning, the following passage throws light on some of the positive benefits of lifelong learning for women.

Staying informed and updated: Most women who have been successful in their lives, in whichever field, have been learning new things; perhaps this learning wasn't classroom learning, maybe it was on-the-field training, but it still helped them establish a base from where, they could help themselves first, then their families, and the society at large. Success could come in many ways, because learning what one has set out to learn is an achievement in itself.

Keeping away from addictions and negative patterns: Problems could take a woman or anyone, toward indulging in self-destructive behaviour, which may take the shape of an incessant need to consume alcohol, or other addictive products. Once such patterns become a habit, it is difficult to get rid of them. One of the best ways to avoid adopting negative leanings is to learn something new, and continue studying and developing skills throughout life.

Developing focus and concentration: Studying can be considered to be a kind of meditation, because it involves a direct and uninterrupted attention on the content being studied, or an activity and actions being observed and remembered. In such a situation, concentration and focus increase and energy flows in a positive direction.

Enabling creativity and innovation: This globe is a reverberating sphere of information and communication, and everything moves from one place to another, through varied channels. To enable innovation and creativity in all areas of life, be it any career, or any standard business culture—acquiring new skills—allows for a connection to new strengths, which ultimately turn into a support system that may not be available otherwise, if there is no endeavour to learn.

Enhancing skills: A list of accomplishments, which have come through any kind of learning, is indicative of the drive to know and to engage in a suitable course of study. Whether there is work, voluntary work, or no work, learning can only be of help because it will occupy those precious hours. No quality learning ever goes to waste.

Improving logical and reasoning abilities: Engaging the mind in intellectual pursuits, will eventually end up filling the mind with empowering thoughts, instead of depressive and melancholia-inducing ones, leading to a balanced personality. And in a balanced state, it is always easier to make good decisions. The ability to clearly understand situations and intelligently reason and react as circumstances demand, therefore, also comes through persevered learning inclinations.

Keeping old age diseases at bay: In old age the body is no longer as fit as in youth. But the mind can still keep things buoyant. Indulging in good habits like reading, another kind of learning, helps in keeping the mind active and creates happiness. Alzheimer's, dementia and some other old-age diseases can be prevented, by reaching out to various forms of learning, consistently through life. Not just diseases, but the general well-being of older women can be maintained by getting involved in lifelong learning.

Improving quality of life: If a woman engages in any kind of further learning activity at any age, she can definitely improve the quality of her life. She will have more topics to interact about, she will have more experiences with which she can improve the lives of others, and her own. A woman's confidence levels will increase, and she will feel surer of herself and her abilities. "Lifelong Learning" definitely facilitates development and increased participation in life, for all. There are numerous benefits of lifelong learning, and the more one delves into this, the more advantages spring up.

Lifelong learning is the "ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated, pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. Therefore, it not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development, but also self-sustainability, rather than competitiveness and employability.

"Lifelong Learning" is, officially, learning that happens after formal education is complete. It is a process whereby additional know-how is gained and improvisation of skills continues to periodically occur through time. Learning can no longer be divided into a place and time to acquire knowledge (school) and a place and time to apply the knowledge acquired (the workplace).[4] Instead, learning can be seen as something that takes place on an ongoing basis from our daily interactions with others and with the world around us. It can take the form of formal learning or informal learning, or self-directed learning. During the last fifty years, constant scientific and technological innovation and change has had a profound effect on learning needs and styles. Women also need to learn new as situation and surrounding environment demands.

Women are a big contributing group of the country. Women, especially, need to find a way forward, to empower themselves if they wish to change, and develop their own lives and those around them. Instead of submerging themselves in unnecessary addictive patterns and sometimes self-defeating attitudes, when faced with life's problems, lifelong learning can steer them away from such self-deprecating behaviour. It can put a woman or any person on a constructive path and can be one of the sources of emancipation and empowerment. Freedom from ignorance and other vices are the prime advantages of lifelong learning.

The different ways in which lifelong learning is currently accessible to women in India are

- On campus learning
- Online learning
- Correspondence courses
- Newspapers, journals and other reading material
- Skills passes from one generation to another (show & tell)
- Specific learning programmes on radio and TV

Looking to the above discussion the question arise what are the lifelong learning needs of the women, whether they are satisfied with the currently available resources for learning or not. Therefore the need arise to conduct the concrete study on the "Lifelong Learning Needs of the Women". A need is certain felt to undertake such a study because the available literature reviewed for the study reveals that in the Indian context no such study has been conducted so far which focuses on lifelong learning needs of urban women. Our word is changing around us in such a frantic pace that if we do not continue to grow and develop; we will soon be left behind. In the 21st century, we all need to be lifelong learners.

We need to continually keep our skills sharp and up to date so that we have an edge in all we do. Of course, we all have a natural desire to learn for adapting to change, enriching and fulfilling our lives.

Lifelong learning covers the whole range of learning that includes: formal, informal, and non-formal learning. It also includes the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour that people acquire in their day-to-day expanses. The driving force to lifelong learning is that people demand an educated workforce in order to respond to a market that demands innovation and efficiency. Lifelong learning describes what an individual learns through the dimensions of a lifetime. However, Lifelong Learning represents the breadth of learning that also occurs in the present time frame in a range of environment and context formal and informal, real and virtual and it is not limited to learning through a regular academic curriculum.

In light of above discussion, the following questions arise:-

1. What are the various lifelong learning courses attended by women after the completion of their formal education?
2. What are the motivational factors for the women to attend lifelong learning courses?
3. Do the women feel a need to have lifelong learning centres in our areas?
4. What were the preferred courses that must be taught in the lifelong learning centres as suggested by women?

To find out the answers to the above mentioned questions, a research study was proposed on "A Study of Identification of lifelong Learning needs of Women of Vadodara City in the year 2016".

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the personal and family background/ profile of selected women of Vadodara city.
2. To study the past record related to lifelong learning of selected women of Vadodara city.
3. To study the lifelong learning needs of the selected women of Vadodara city.
4. To study the suggestions obtained by the selected women of Vadodara city regarding Lifelong Learning centres.

The study is delimited to the working and non-working women of selected areas of Vadodara city.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

The population under the study comprised of women of Vadodara city. 90 women were selected from Gotri, Alkapuri and Tarsali areas of Vadodara city as a sample of the study.

Selection of the Sample

For the present study researcher selected urban women both working and non working from Gotri, Alkapuri and Tarsali areas of Vadodara city. The women who were willing to fill up the questionnaire were selected as sample of the study. Thus purposive sampling was used to draw the sample. The women were contacted personally and they were oriented about the purpose of the study. On a whole 90 urban women, 30 each from Gotri, Alkapuri and Tarsali areas of Vadodara city were selected as sample. Researcher personally visited their homes and got the questionnaires filled up. The total sample size for the study was 90.

Tool for Data Collection

One structured questionnaire was prepared by the researcher to collect the data from the women. The researcher constructed the tool to study the background information, needs of lifelong learning and suggestions.

The researcher carried out below mentioned points which helped in the construction of tool.

- Interacted and discussed with the women about lifelong learning.
- Interacted and discussed with the women about lifelong learning and their opinions about it.
- Reviewed related literature from various sources such as journals, research reports and internet.

Procedure of Data Collection

The researcher personally collected the data by administering the questionnaire during the month of January 2016. Before giving the questionnaire to the women, researcher contacted the women and took appointment for visit as per their schedule. The researcher explained them the purpose of study and then asked

them to fill up the questionnaire. The respondents took 10-15 minutes to fill the questionnaire. Few of the respondents returned the questionnaire within 2-3 days.

The researcher faced some problems during data collection which were as follows:

- Some of the respondents returned the questionnaire too late.
- Some of the respondents did not give complete information.
- Some of the respondents did not return the questionnaire.

Table 1 : Scoring and Categorization of the data

Sr. No.	Background Information	Basis	Category
1	Age	Mean and below mean	Young
		Above mean	Middle young
2	Marital status	Married	Married
		Unmarried	Unmarried
		Separate	
		Divorced	
		Widow	
3	Educational Qualification	Primary	Lower level of education
		Secondary	
		Higher Secondary	Higher level of education
		Graduate	
		Post- Graduate	
4	Occupational Status	Housewife	Housewife
		Service	Service
		Business	Business
5	Monthly Family Income	Less than 20,000	Less income
		21,000 to 40,000	Moderate Income
		More than 40,000	High Income
6	Types of Family	Joint	Joint
		Nuclear	Nuclear
7	Total number of Family Members	Less than 3	Small Family
		3 to 5	Moderate Family
		More than 5	Large Family
8	Total number of Kids	1 to 2	Less number
		More than 3	More number
9	Need of Lifelong Learning	Mean and below mean 41	More needs
		Above mean 45	Less needs

FINDINGS

- More number (58.89%) of women were from younger age group.
- Higher majority (90%) of the respondents were married.
- Thirty two percent of the respondents were graduate and twenty eight percent of the respondents were post graduate.
- Majority (63.9%) of the respondents were homemakers.
- Forty five percent of the respondent's monthly family income was between Rs. 21,000 to Rs 40,000.
- Majority (62 %) of the respondents were living in nuclear family.
- Majority (71 %) of the respondents had 3-5 members in the family.
- Majority of the respondents attended different courses after the completion of formal education.
- Forty percent of the respondents attended computer literacy course after the completion of formal education whereas very few (5 %) respondents attended the course related to handicrafts.

Table 2 : Courses attended by the women under lifelong Learning

Courses	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Computer literacy	22	40.74
Stitching	21	38.88
Recipes	13	24.07
Embroidery	11	20.37
Spoken English	10	18.51
Arts and Crafts	8	14.81
Mehandi	8	14.81
Beauty Parlour	8	14.81
Dance	6	11.11
Music	5	9.25
Handicrafts	3	5.55

- Majority (64 %) of the respondent attended the course at private classes whereas fifty four percent of the respondent learn through television. Very few (9 %) learn through radio.
- Majority (64 % & 60%) attended the course to full fill household responsibilities and to learn new technology whereas fifty five percent of the respondents attended the course to remain mentally and physically active. Only twenty five percent wanted to learn new recipes.

Table 3 : Reasons for Lifelong Learning

Reasons for learning	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
For Household Responsibilities	57	64.77
To learn new technology	53	60.22
To remain mentally and physically active	49	55.68
Information about recent development	43	48.86
Maintain relationship	34	38.63
For own makeover	32	36.36
To keep oneself busy	31	35.22
For child rearing	28	31.81
To learn new recipes	22	25

- Half of the respondents were satisfied with the internet as a source of learning.
- Majority of the respondents felt the need for lifelong learning centres.
- Higher majority (80 %) of the respondents wanted to learn about health and well being whereas majority wants to learn about new technology..
- Majority of the respondents are comfortable with all seasons for learning.
- Majority of the respondents preferred evening time to learn the courses.
- Seventy eight percent of the respondents showed the willingness to join the courses at life long learning center.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveals that majority of the women were homemakers they wants to learn something new and reason could be they are not getting enough opportunity of learning at home. There is specific need for knowledge at different phases of life. The young mother may want to know new child rearing practices and management skills to reform their responsibilities effectively, the middle aged mothers is more concerned about health issues and careers of their kids. The life long learning sources may not cover all types of information. Hence, it is strongly recommended that life long learning centres should be started in all sub-areas of the city, wherein women have easy accessibility to it. The need based programmes can be planned for updating homemakers with the everyday challenges they face to cope with their families and community at large.

Another major finding reveals that women prefer television as a medium for learning than the radio it shows that TV is powerful than the radio whereas internet

users were still lesser internet users were more satisfied than the television viewers. It shows that the internet is more powerful in satisfying the learning needs of women but women were not techno friendly and therefore they prefer TV as a medium for learning. TV has wide impact on masses specifically women. They prefer watching TV along with their daily routine chores. There are wide number of channels to select from special channels and programme are being viewed on recipe demonstration, housekeeping, money management, fashion, sports, astrology lifestyle and health issues. It must be helping women to ponder over it whereas internet is interactive and provides us the information on the topic which you want to learn. The whole world is accessible on it and hence there are almost all topics on which knowledge can be acquired. Learning about new media, by most of the women must therefore be the reason to join classes.

This could be the reason for majority women gone for computer literary after the completion of formal education. Majority of women want to learn new course to remain mentally and physically active. Majority of them shown willingness to learn new course and they suggested having centre for learning in the city.

So looking to the findings we can conclude that the lifelong learning is a need of women and they needs to learn for their self development and their families' development. It keeps them active and updated with recent knowledge around. They want to change them as per the new environment and for that they want to learn and be part of life long learning process.

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